

The Odd Couple

It seemed a marriage of sandals and Gucci loafers, of body odors and *Bal à Versailles*, of radical cheek and radical chic. The corporate merger announced last week between the *Village Voice* and *New York* magazine struck many observers as the oddest of couplings.

Since 1955, the tabloid *Voice* (circ. 150,000) has earnestly chronicled the peculiarities of New York City life, its iconoclastic eye quick to spot problems of the underdog. Unremittingly quarrelsome, wordy and underedited, the *Voice* also captures the funky, ingrown perspective of Greenwich Village. Its re-

The offbeat union makes considerable financial sense. The *Voice* parent company's debt was absorbed by *New York's* publishing company, which in 1973 earned \$401,000 on sales of \$9.7 million. The paper's principal owners, Millionaire City Councilman Carter Burden and *Voice* President Bartle Bull, received \$800,000 in cash and 600,000 shares of New York Magazine Co. stock, which amounts to 34% of the outstanding shares. For *New York* Editor and Publisher Clay Felker, 45, who is also president of the parent company, acquisition of the *Voice* added a new dimension to his journalistic career. Felker joined Time Inc. in 1951 and worked as

But Felker is known as a mover, and news of the merger touched off anger and dismay among some *Voice* employees. To allay the fears, Carter Burden met with staffers and assured them that the *Voice* would retain its rumpled, muckraking identity. Some *New York* contributors also expressed misgivings about the new arrangement. Says Political Writer Richard Reeves: "I would like to do a story on what Carter Burden is really like. How can I when he owns a piece of what I write?" A lonely note of humor came from *Voice* Assistant Editor Jack Newfield, who has also written for *New York*. Preparing for what most of his co-workers fear is inevitable, Newfield began concocting titles that could be accommodated in both the *Voice* and *New York*. His first: "The Favorite Recipes of the Ten Worst Bisexual Judges in New York."

JILL KREMENTZ



VILLAGE VOICE'S CARTER BURDEN (LEFT) & NEW YORK'S CLAY FELKER
Merging radical cheek with radical chic.

viewers, including such first-rate critics as Nat Hentoff and Andrew Sarris, dig up underground entertainment far from Broadway or first-run moviehouses. Columns by Militant Lesbian Jill Johnston flow endlessly, devoid of all punctuation, capitalization and—usually—sense.

New York (circ. 355,000), which emerged from the defunct *Herald Tribune* as a separate weekly in 1968, rapidly established its own flip, highly successful style—typified by such contributors as Tom Wolfe, Gail Sheehy and Economist "Adam Smith." Although it adopted some of the *Voice's* interests and also produces excellent coverage of politics and communications, *New York* set its prime sights on the glossy worries and aspirations of more affluent New Yorkers, telling them how to recognize the best of everything and where to buy it. If the *Voice* tries to counter the reigning establishment of the moment, *New York* seeks to create the next one.

a LIFE correspondent in New York and Washington before moving to *Esquire* as feature editor in 1957. Hired as editor of the *Herald Tribune's* Sunday magazine section in 1963, he transformed it into *New York* in 1968 after the *Trib* folded.

In all of these positions, Felker made his mark as an innovator, but he insists that he has no plans for "intermingling" the *Voice* and *New York* and promises that differences between the two will be preserved: "They're passionate about some things, we're passionate about others. They can pound away week after week on a single issue in a way that we can't." To reports that he is considering a nationwide network of city magazines, which could use articles from both *New York* and the *Voice*, Felker admits that "it's theoretically possible. There are three or four ways we could go, but all of them are based on keeping the *Voice* just as it stands. Right now I'm very strong for the status quo."

P- Felker, CLAY

P- BURDEN, CARTER